

Crisis in Our City Network
crisisinourcity@gmail.com



December 16, 2024

To: Mayor Olivia Chow & Members of City Council
City of Toronto
100 Queen St. W.
Toronto, ON M5H 2N2

Subject: Formal Request to Adopt Ombudsman Toronto Recommendations Regarding Refugee Claimant Access to Shelter Services

Dear Mayor Chow and Members of Council,

We are writing on behalf of the Crisis in Our City Network to express our deep concern regarding the City of Toronto's refusal to adopt the recommendations outlined in the Toronto Ombudsman's report on the exclusion of refugee claimants from the City's base shelter system.

This matter, which is set to be addressed under agenda item **CC24.1 - Ombudsman Toronto Report - An Investigation into the City's Decision to Stop Allowing Refugee Claimants into Base Shelter System Beds (Ward All)** at the upcoming City Council meeting, is of critical importance to Toronto's most vulnerable residents.

The Ombudsman's report, released on December 12, 2024, highlights systemic failures and provides actionable recommendations to address the inequities that have led to the exclusion of refugee claimants. These recommendations include:

1. **Transparency and Equity:** Ensuring decisions on shelter access are made transparently and equitably.
2. **Community Engagement:** Engaging in meaningful consultations with affected communities and agencies.
3. **Policy Review:** Conducting a comprehensive review of existing shelter system policies to prevent exclusionary practices.
4. **Commitment to Human Rights:** Aligning shelter policies with Toronto's commitment to human rights and universal access, as outlined in the AccessTO policy.

The findings of the report are not only a reflection of the challenges within the shelter system but also a roadmap for change. As elected officials, you hold a pivotal role in upholding Toronto's reputation as a city committed to equity, human rights, and fairness.

We respectfully request that Council:

1. **Publicly commit** to implementing the Ombudsman's recommendations in full.

2. **Establish a detailed implementation plan** with timelines, accountability measures, and clear milestones.
3. **Engage stakeholders and community organizations** to ensure inclusive and transparent execution of these recommendations.

The exclusion of refugee claimants from shelter services has had devastating consequences on vulnerable individuals and families. We urge you to consider the moral, legal, and social implications of inaction on this issue.

We kindly request your response no later than **Thursday, December 19, 2024**, confirming Council's commitment to implementing the Ombudsman's recommendations. Failure to act on these recommendations would perpetuate systemic inequities and undermine Toronto's credibility and obligations under the Toronto Ombudsman Act, the City of Toronto Act, and international human rights standards.

The Crisis in Our City Network remains available to support and collaborate on the execution of these critical measures.

The Crisis in Our City Network is a coalition of community organizations, advocates, and stakeholders dedicated to addressing systemic issues affecting vulnerable populations in Toronto with a focus on refugees and newcomers. We focus on fostering collaboration and driving action to ensure equitable access to essential services.

Thank you for your attention to this urgent matter.

Sincerely,



Pastor Eddie Jjumba

Co-Chair

Crisis in Our City Network

(416-837-1790)

crisisinourcity@gmail.com

CC:

- Office of the Toronto Ombudsman
- Advocacy and Community Organizations

Attachment: Formal Letter to the City Manager – Crisis in Our City Network - dated, Monday, December 16th 2024.